

Commercial and Industrial Buildings,
James Beach and Sons Company
Factory and Warehouse
57 South Locust Street
Dubuque
Dubuque County
Iowa

HABS No. IA-160-F

HABS
IOWA,
31-DUBU,
13-F-

**PHOTOGRAPHS
HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

Historic American Buildings Survey
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
P.O. Box 25287
Denver Colorado 80225

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Site Location: 57 South Locust Street
Dubuque, Dubuque County, Iowa
DOT designation: Resource Site Nos. 2.20, 2.21
Cadastral grid: NE1/4 SE1/4 S25 T89N R2E
USGS quadrangle: Dubuque South Iowa 7.5'
UTM coordinates: 15.691800.4706700
Lot dimensions: 299'x 280': 1.92 acres
Lot description: City Lots 580-583
Present Owner: Iowa Department of Transportation
Present Usage: wholesale plumbing business offices and warehouse
Present Condition: fair

Overall Dimensions: 125'x 148'; 4 stories

Orientation: east

Architectural

Description:

Plan type: (see physical history for description of original) four-story rectangular, with 1- and 2-story wings on the south; elevator tower in corner of original ell.

Foundation: coursed limestone ashlar perimeter walls.

Structure: heavy timber post-and-beam frame with brick masonry bearing walls.

Ext. walls: common red brick laid in common bond.

Roofs: flat composition roofs with brick parapets and terra cotta coping tiles.

Chimneys: (original chimneys removed); six-story brick chimney once extended from southeast corner of power house.

Windows: 4/4 double hung sash with concrete lug sills and brick segmental arched heads; this pattern is seen on the front and south sides and on the east half of the north side; on the west half the windows are 6/6 double hung sash with concrete lug sills and segmental arched heads.

Openings: single-leaf primary entrance on front: paneled door with sidelights, a deep reveal and a loose framed by 1 row of rowlock bricks; single-leaf door in northeast corner with 12 lights and one panel and has a surround composed of one row of stretchers and soldiers.

Porches: concrete loading dock with corrugated steel shed roof aligns most of north wall.

Details : modestly corbeled brick courses on parapets;
two bands of painted letter identifying the
business [A.Y. McDonald] on front.

Construction Date : 1910-11

Architecture Style: Nineteenth Century Functional

Physical History : Born in Rhenish, Prussia, in August 1823, F.M. Pleins immigrated to America in October 1849. He moved to Iowa and in August 1855 settled in Dubuque, where he established F.M. Pleins and Company to manufacture soap and candles. Using the byproducts from Dubuque's thriving meat processing industry, Pleins's small plant employed three men to render soap and form candles in three small frame buildings at the corner of Dodge and Bluff streets. A native of Dover, New Hampshire, James Beach came to Dubuque in the spring of 1858 at the age of 28, after spending a year in Chicago. That year Beach bought half interest in Pleins's firm, which was then renamed Pleins and Beach. The company quickly outgrew its existing facilities. In 1863 the two men completed a two-story, 55' x 136' stone factory that Pleins had begun in 1856, with an attached 40' x 50' warehouse, for \$16,000.

In 1880 Beach took over the business from his partner and continued producing soap under the name of the Dubuque Lard, Oil, Soap and Candle Company. (He soon changed this to the James Beach Company.) With ten employees, the company turned out up to 10,000 boxes of soap annually in nine varieties: Legal Tender, Peerless, White Castile, Royal, Blue, German, Family, Key City and Imperial. Additionally, Beach produced about 3,500 summer-pressed and molded candles and 300-500 barrels of winter-stained lard oil using eight presses. "The soap is claimed to be of superior quality," an 1880 history stated, "is manufactured by an entirely new process, patented by Mr. Pleins, its discoverer, and, with their own commodities, is marketed to jobbers in Dubuque and the West, the annual sales of which aggregated not less than \$50,000."

Business continued to grow, and by 1894 Beach had renamed the company James Beach and Sons to reflect the participation of his three children, Charles, Edward and George. In 1909 James and Charles built new houses for themselves. The following year the Beach family began construction of a new four-story, brick packing house on the site of the earlier plant. Costing an estimated \$75,000, it was completed early in 1911. "The building is a commodious one, occupying 450 by 300 feet of ground space and affording 75,999 square feet of working space," a business gazetteer stated soon after the new facility was opened. "This firm has adopted the newest methods and installed the latest machinery. With this careful attention and outlay, the product placed on the market is bound to be one which would mean increased sales." The building was organized with the business offices and shipping and framing rooms on the second floor of the main section; pressing, cutting and packing were conducted on the third floor. The first and fourth floors were used for storage.

The smaller ell housed large soap boiling kettles with attendant facilities. A small mixing room infilled the inside corner of the ell. The factory wrapped around a separate one-story brick power house, which was adjoined by a railroad spur. The buildings featured typical heavy-timber industrial construction, with post-and-beam internal framing and masonry perimeter bearing walls. With no pretense for retail sales, they displayed the plainest of late 19th Century commercial detailing, with modest brick corbeling of the cornice, typical arched-head wood windows and simple entrances with no plate-glass storefront. Evidently the similarly detailed two-story warehouse next to the factory was built at this time, as well.

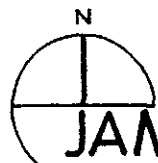
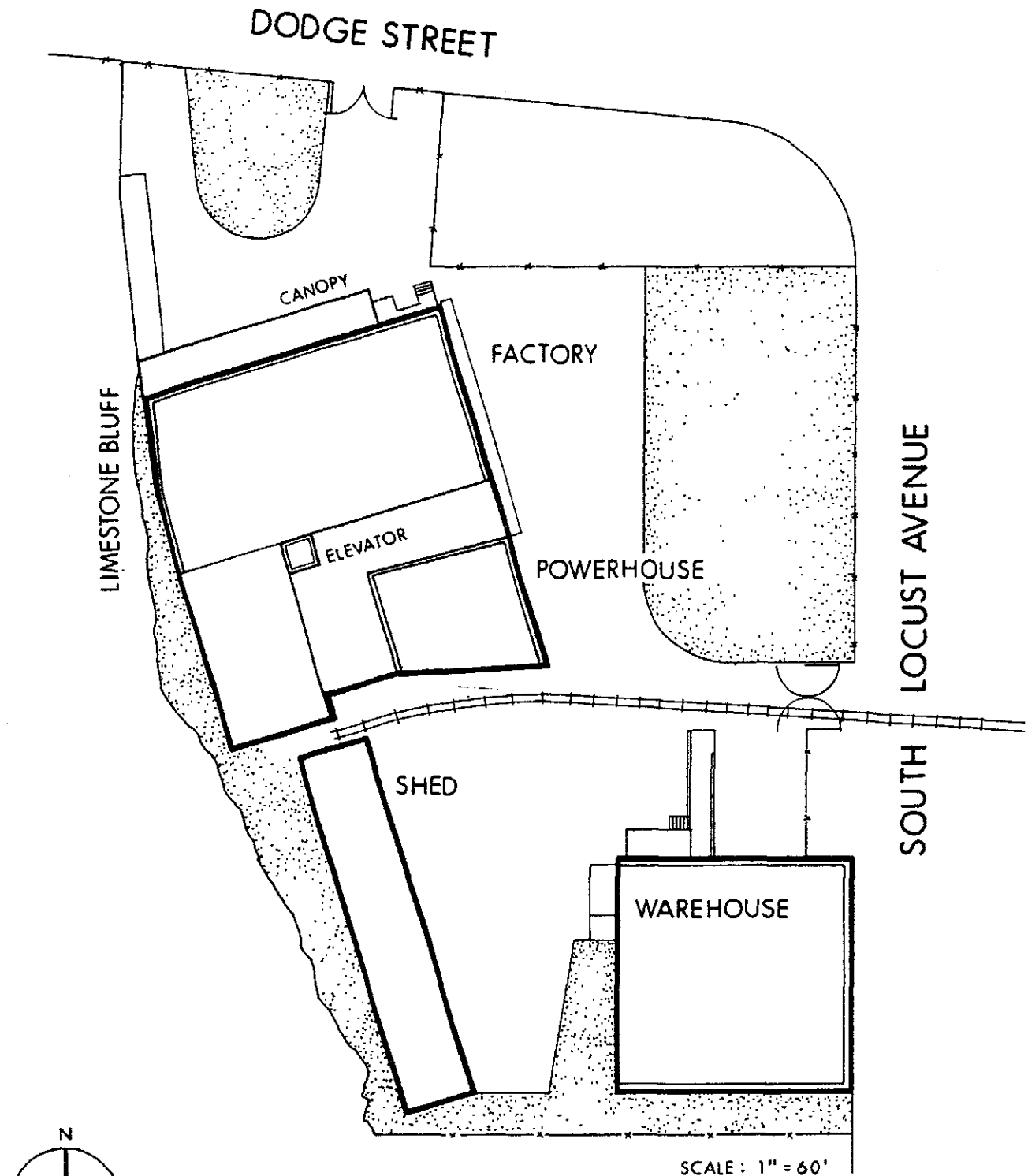
After the Beach Company went into receivership in 1936, the building stood vacant and the lot used as storage yards for Peter Seippel's Dodge Street lumber company. The A.Y. McDonald Company, Dubuque's giant plumbing fixture producer, acquired the property in 1937 and moved into the building four years later. It is assumed that McDonald removed the upper levels from the south ell soon thereafter. The factory was converted to a warehouse, and the power house was converted to a pipe shop and warehouse for plumbing goods. In 1974 the company connected this structure with the main plant by building a narrow one-story, L-shaped infill building. Other than minor changes in fenestration, the Beach factory has stood essentially unaltered since. The warehouse has undergone major changes to its storefront but retains its overall form.

Significance: As the third generation plant of what was at one time Dubuque's oldest industrial firm, the Beach factory is historically important to the interpretation of the city's history. Architecturally, the building is a representative example of the industrial structures built in south Dubuque in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

References: Dubuque City Directories: 1857 - 1970.
Sanborn Insurance Maps: 1879, 1884, 1891, 1909, 1972.
Iowa State Gazetteer and Business Directory: 1882-1923.
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The History of Dubuque County, Iowa (Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1880), pages 764, 858.
Dubuque: Its Manufacturing and Commercial Facilities (Dubuque: The Times Company, 1886), page 77.
Dubuque Telegraph-Herald: 6 March 1910.

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page 4



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FACTORY AND WAREHOUSE

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